



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION
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MINUTES

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION April 13, 2005

I. MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Robert E. Cusack
Mr. Robert Goff
Mr. John Grosvenor, AIA
Ms. Patrice O'Malley Hagan
Mr. Michael Hebert, NR Review Board
Mr. Karst Hoogeboom
Dr. E. Pierre Morenon
Mr. Frederick C. Williamson, Chairman & SHPO

STAFF PRESENT

Mr. Jeffrey Emidy, National Register Assistant
Mr. Robert O. Jones, Senior Architectural Historian
Ms. Pamela Kennedy, Deputy Director
Dr. Paul Robinson, Principal Archaeologist
Mr. Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mr. Joseph Dias, representing Mr. Frederick Vincent, Acting Director DEM
Dr. James Garman, NR Review Board
Mr. John O'Brien, Chief of Statewide Planning
Dr. Patrick Malone
Mr. Robert J. McKenna, representing Senator Stephen Alves
Dr. Ronald Onorato
Dr. Patricia Rubertone
Dr. Daniel Snyder
State Building Commissioner
House Finance Committee

II. AGENDA

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 9:35 AM, Mr. Williamson, Chairman, presiding.

2. Minutes of February 9, 2005

On a motion by Mr. Hoozeboom, seconded by Mr. Goff, the Commission VOTED unanimously to approve the Minutes of March 9, 2005.

3. Executive Director's Report

a) Mr. Sanderson reported on a recent press conference with Governor Carcieri, Senate President Montalbano, and House Speaker Fox at which Grow Smart Rhode Island released its economic impact study of the benefits of the RI Historic Preservation Investment Tax Credit. A fact sheet that summarizes the report was distributed.

b) Mr. Sanderson reported on plans for the 20th annual Statewide Historic Preservation Conference scheduled for April 23 in Newport.

c) Mr. Sanderson reported on the Westerly Armory "Youth Leadership" Program. On a motion by Mr. Hoozeboom, seconded by Ms. Hagen, the Commission

VOTED unanimously

Whereas Westerly Armory Restoration, Inc., has taken on the task of preserving and maintaining the historic Westerly Armory, and

Whereas Westerly Armory Restoration, Inc., has initiated a Youth Leadership in Historic Preservation Program in which qualified college and secondary students perform a variety of tasks related to the preservation of the Armory, including historical research, collections cataloging, leading tours, planning special events, coordinating volunteers, and assisting in grounds maintenance, and

Whereas, members of the Youth Leadership in Historic Preservation Program are mentored by members of the board of directors of Westerly Armory Restoration, Inc., in learning and using their historic preservation skills,

Now, therefore, the RIHP&HC sends

Congratulations to Westerly Armory Restoration, Inc., on the initiation and development of an admirable program which introduces the next generation of preservationists to the historic buildings of the state and to the skills needed to preserve them for the future, and

Greetings to members of the Youth Leadership in Historic Preservation Program and good

wishes for their success in helping to preserve the Westerly Armory.

d) Mr. Sanderson reported on the need to revise the State Preservation Grant Regulations to incorporate new language in the 2004 Bond Issue, including a definition of "public historic site." RIHPHC staff plan to draft regulations in the coming weeks and will need to publish the draft regulations for public comment at least thirty days prior to holding a public hearing. Final approval of the revised regulations will require a vote by the Commission following the public hearing. Following discussion, on a motion by Mr. Grosvenor, seconded by Ms. Hagen, the Commission

VOTED unanimously to authorize the Executive Director to draft proposed revised SPG regulations, and after distributing the proposed revisions to Commissioners, the Executive Director is authorized to publish the draft revised regulations for public comment.

e) Mr. Sanderson distributed new guidance from the Rhode Island Ethics Commission on gift regulations that limit gifts to \$25.

4. National Register Review Board

Final Approval

Providence Fruit and Produce Warehouse Company Building, 6-64 Harris Avenue,
Providence

Ms. Kennedy presented information about this property. In reply to a question about the property's future use, Mr. Sanderson described the rehabilitation proposal selected by the RIDOT and reviewed by RIHPHC staff to develop apartments and/or retail shops in the building. Rehabilitation work will meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and the project will be subject to RIHPHC review. A preliminary proposal included a large glass canopy to be added to the south elevation; this area is screened from any significant public view by multiple highway ramps. Following discussion, on a motion by Ms. Hagen, seconded by Mr. Grosvenor, the Commission

VOTED to approve the nomination.

Mr. Hebert did not vote or participate in discussion on the nomination since the owner is the RIDOT.

Bernon Worsted Mill, 828 Park Avenue, Woonsocket

Mr. Emidy presented information about the Bernon Mill. During discussion, several Commissioners commented that the wooden additions on the rear of the mill are of lesser significance than the original masonry portion of the mill complex. Following discussion, on a motion by Mr. Grosvenor, seconded by Ms. Hagen, the Commission

VOTED unanimously to approve the nomination.

Preliminary Approval

Seven Oaks, 136 Hope Street, Bristol

Mr. Emidy presented information about this property. The house is located within the Bristol Waterfront Historic District that already is listed on the National Register. However, the owner wishes the property to be nominated for individual listing. The original house, designed by architect James Renwick in 1873 is a fine example of domestic architecture. Some alterations have occurred on the interior that need further documentation. Following discussion, on a motion by Mr. Hooeboom, seconded by Mr. Grosvenor, the Commission

VOTED unanimously preliminary approval for the nomination.

Church of St. Ann, 98 Cumberland Street, Woonsocket

Ms. Kennedy presented information about the Church of St. Ann that already is listed on the National Register. However, the applicant seeks to have the property significance changed from “state” level to “national” level. In the years since St. Ann Church was listed, scholarly interest in Guido Nincheri, the artist who carried out the decoration of the interior, has increased and now suggests that the church should be considered nationally significant. Where the original nomination noted that St. Ann’s interior reflects an “ambitious neo-Renaissance decorative program,” it is now clear that the interior is principally the work of Nincheri himself and that the production of Nincheri and his studio constitutes a significant body of North American church decoration. Taking into account the additional information that has become available in the years since the original National Register nomination, a change in the level of significance seems warranted. Following discussion, on a motion by Ms. Hagen, seconded by Dr. Morenon, the Commission

VOTED unanimously to approve changing the level of significance from “state” to “national.”

Parkis-Comstock Historic District Amendment, Providence

Ms. Kennedy presented information about the historic district that already is listed on the National Register and about several properties that have been proposed for addition to the historic district. The original district includes a group of large late-19th-century houses located on Parkis Avenue and Comstock Avenue, just off Elmwood Avenue. Historically, Elmwood Avenue was a major street running from downtown through several of Providence’s western neighborhoods. Typically large, architecturally distinctive houses were built along sections of Elmwood Avenue and on nearby cross streets. Other sections of the West Side contained more modest dwellings and factories. Following discussion about the several properties proposed for addition to the Parkis-Comstock Historic District, on a motion by Mr. Hooeboom, seconded by Mr. Grosvenor, the Commission

VOTED unanimously to preliminary approval for amending the district to include several large houses located on Elmwood Avenue and not to include several smaller houses not located on Elmwood Avenue.

Greenwich Mills, 42 Ladd Street, East Greenwich

Mr. Emidy presented information about the 1918 worsted mill complex. Following discussion, on a motion by Ms. Hagen, seconded by Mr. Cusack, the Commission

VOTED unanimously preliminary approval for the nomination.

Mr. Grosvenor did not vote on the motion or participate in the discussion.

5. Archaeology Presentation

Dr. Alan Leveille from the Public Archaeology Lab (PAL) and Dr. Paul Robinson (RIHPHC) presented information about the Lavery Site in Charlestown. The site is located in the area of the small housing subdivision that was subject to permitting by the RI Coastal Resources Management Council and review by the RIHPHC. When Dr. Robinson identified the project area as potentially sensitive for Native American sites, the developer engaged PAL to perform archaeological investigations. Dr. Leveille reported that a number of features were discovered that suggest the site was part of a large area where Indians lived, worked, and buried their dead. The information recovered by the investigation sheds important new light on the concept of Indian villages, and suggests that Indian households were not clustered together like a European village but rather were dispersed through a "settlement landscape." This insight changes previous models of Indian settlement and will inform future archaeological studies. With the cooperation of the landowner, the development plan for the Lavery Site was altered to locate construction of several houses away from human burials and to preserve a portion of the settlement features.

Commissioners had a number of questions for Dr. Leveille, praised his excellent work, and thanked him for the presentation.

6. Other Business: There was no other business.

7. Next meeting date: The next regular meeting of the Commission will be Wednesday, May 11, 2005.

8. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 11:59 AM.

Minutes recorded by,

Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director